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**STATE OF WISCONSIN  
Division of Hearings and Appeals**

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In the Matter of

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

DECISION

KIN/152822

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**PRELIMINARY RECITALS**

Pursuant to a petition filed October 11, 2013, under Wis. Stat. § 48.57(3m)(f), and Wis. Admin. Code § DCF 58.08(2)(b), to review a decision by the Professional Services Group - PSG in regard to Kinship Care, a hearing was held on November 12, 2013, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The issue for determination is whether the agency correctly denied Petitioner's application for Kinship Care benefits for Petitioner's great-granddaughter.

There appeared at that time and place the following persons:

**PARTIES IN INTEREST:**

Petitioner:

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Respondent:

Department of Children and Families  
201 East Washington Avenue  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

By: Stephanie Purpero, of PSG, on behalf of  
Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare  
Milwaukee, WI

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:**

David D. Fleming  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Petitioner is a resident of Milwaukee County.
2. Petitioner applied for Kinship Care for her grandchildren, JDB (5/23/07) and KPB (11/21/04), in September 2013 with the agency which previously handled Kinship Care for the BMCW in Milwaukee County. Petitioner is the maternal grandmother.

3. Petitioner previously had Kinship Care benefits for these children but it ended in May 2011.
4. The fathers of the two children are unknown.
5. The agency that processed this application did not have contact with the mother of the two children. Her whereabouts are not clear.
6. Petitioner does not have a guardianship in place for the two children, nor is there a child protective services (CPS) history.

### **DISCUSSION**

The Kinship Care benefit is a public assistance payment of \$220 per month per child paid to a qualified relative who bears no legal responsibility to support the child. In Wisconsin, this benefit replaces the former Non-Legally Responsible Relative (NLRR) Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) payment. To be eligible for the payments, the relative must meet all of the conditions set forth in *Wis. Stat. §§ 48.57(3m)(am)(1-5) or 48.57(3n)(am)(1-6)*. Subsection (3m) concerns Children in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) and subsection (3n) concerns guardianship cases.

For a guardianship based Kinship Care application under statutory subsection (3n) the Wisconsin Administrative Code further requires that the Kinship Care applicant provide proof that they have been named as guardian under *§48.977, Stats.; Wis. Admin. Code, §DCF, 58.15*. In this case, there is no guardianship so I cannot find that Petitioner is eligible to receive Kinship under guardianship provisions.

This decision must still decide whether Petitioner's case meets CHIPS based Kinship Care eligibility criteria. The Statutes require that:

...A county department and, in a county having a population of 500,000 or more, the department shall make payments in the amount of \$215 per month to a Kinship Care relative who is providing care and maintenance for a child if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The Kinship Care relative applies to the county department or department for payments under this subsection and the county department or department determines that there is a need for the child to be placed with the Kinship Care relative and that the placement with the Kinship Care relative is in the best interests of the child.
2. The county department or department determines that the child meets one or more of the criteria specified in s. 48.13 or 938.13, that the child would be at risk of meeting one or more of those criteria if the child were to remain in his or her home or, if the child is 18 years of age or over, that the child would meet or be at risk of meeting one or more of those criteria as specified in this subdivision if the child were under 18 years of age.

*§48.57(3m)(a)2(am), Wis. Stats.*

The *Wisconsin Administrative Code*, at *§DCF 58.10(1)*, describes the "need" for placement as follows:

- (a) The child needs the kinship living arrangement. The agency shall determine that the child needs the kinship living arrangement by determining at least one of the following:
  1. The child's need for adequate food, shelter and clothing can be better met with the relative than with the child's parent or parents.
  2. The child's need to be free from physical, sexual or emotional injury, neglect or exploitation can be better met with the relative than with the child's parent or parents.
  3. The child's need to develop physically, mentally and emotionally to his or her potential can be better met with the relative than with the child's parent or parents.

4. The child's need for a safe or permanent family can be better met with the relative than with the child's parent or parents.

It must also be noted that, in Decision No. KIN-40/51985, dated May 22, 2002, the Department's deputy secretary concluded that even when the assessor finds that one of the four grounds cited above are met, there still must be evidence that there is a risk to the child cited in *Wis. Stat. §48.13* if the child were to live with a parent. Essentially that decision ties together the first two conditions cited in *Wis. Stat. §48.57(3m)(am)*, that there be a need for the placement and that the child be at risk of harm that could lead to a Child In Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) case. It also confirms that at least one of the criteria in the list at *Wis. Stat. §48.13* must be satisfied.

Chapter 938 of the Statutes deals with juvenile justice issues and juveniles involved in delinquencies who also need protection or services; Chapter 48 is entitled 'Children's Code' and is the relevant chapter for this case. The statutory citation referenced above – *Wis. Stat. §48.13*, which provides for jurisdiction over children alleged to be in need of protection or services – is relevant here and provides as follows:

The court has exclusive original jurisdiction over a child alleged to be in need of protection or services which can be ordered by the court, and:

- (1) Who is without a parent or guardian;
- (2) Who has been abandoned;
- (2m) Whose parent has relinquished custody of the child under s. 48.195 (1);
- (3) Who has been the victim of abuse, as defined in s. 48.02 (1)(a), (b), (c), (d), (e) or (f), including injury that is self-inflicted or inflicted by another;
- (3m) Who is at substantial risk of becoming the victim of abuse, as defined in s. 48.02 (1)(a), (b), (c), (d), (e) or (f), including injury that is self-inflicted or inflicted by another, based on reliable and credible information that another child in the home has been the victim of such abuse;
- (4) Whose parent or guardian signs the petition requesting jurisdiction under this subsection and is unable or needs assistance to care for or provide necessary special treatment or care for the child;
- (5) Who has been placed for care or adoption in violation of law;
- (8) Who is receiving inadequate care during the period of time a parent is missing, incarcerated, hospitalized or institutionalized;
- (9) Who is at least age 12, signs the petition requesting jurisdiction under this subsection and is in need of special treatment or care which the parent, guardian or legal custodian is unwilling, neglecting, unable or needs assistance to provide;
- (10) Whose parent, guardian or legal custodian neglects, refuses or is unable for reasons other than poverty to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child;
- (10m) Whose parent, guardian or legal custodian is at substantial risk of neglecting, refusing or being unable for reasons other than poverty to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to endanger seriously the physical health of the child, based on reliable and credible information that the child's parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused or been unable for reasons other than poverty to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to endanger seriously the physical health of another child in the home;

(11) Who is suffering emotional damage for which the parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused or been unable and is neglecting, refusing or unable, for reasons other than poverty, to obtain necessary treatment or to take necessary steps to ameliorate the symptoms;

(11m) Who is suffering from an alcohol and other drug abuse impairment, exhibited to a severe degree, for which the parent, guardian or legal custodian is neglecting, refusing or unable to provide treatment; or

(13) Who has not been immunized as required by s. 252.04 and not exempted under s. 252.04 (3).  
 §48.13, Wis. Stats.

In a nutshell, the placement must be in the best interests of the child and there must be need for the placement as demonstrated by evidence of the child being a CHIPS or JIPS child or the likelihood that the child would be such if living with a parent.

The denial decision was based on a case analysis performed by a worker with a prior agency, thus the agency testimony consists of hearsay. Administrative decisions cannot be based solely upon uncorroborated hearsay. . *Gehin v. Wisconsin Group Ins. Bd.*, 2005 WI 16, ¶¶ 53-56 & 58, 278 Wis. 2d 111, 692 N.W.2d 572; See also, *Williams v. Housing Auth. of City of Milwaukee*, 2010 WI App 14, ¶¶ 14 & 19, 323 Wis. 2d 179, 187 & 189, 779 N.W.2d 185 ("[u]ncorroborated hearsay evidence, even if admissible, does not by itself constitute substantial evidence.").

Nonetheless, as this is an application the burden of proof/burden of persuasion lies with Petitioner and this case turns on that burden of proof. It is a well-established principle that a moving party generally has the burden of proof, especially in administrative proceedings. *State v. Hanson*, 295 N.W.2d 209, 98 Wis. 2d 80 at 90 (Wis. App. 1980). Thus in a case involving an application for assistance, the applicant has the initial burden to establish he or she met the application requirements.

Petitioner testified that she has no idea where her daughter is and has not seen her in six years; if she had to contact her, she would not know how or where to reach her. She stated that she has 7 children and that none of the other six have contact information for the mother of the children involved here. Quite frankly, this stretches credulity and Petitioner's testimony was presented in a fashion that provided no background or context. Petitioner has not provided enough information to demonstrate that the children for whom she seeks Kinship Care meet at least one of the criteria under §48.13, Stats. Thus the agency correctly denied her application for Kinship Care.

Petitioner may want to pursue a Chapter 48 guardianship through the Milwaukee County Children's Court and may reapply for Kinship Care.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

That Petitioner has not demonstrated that the children for whom she seeks the Kinship Care benefits meet the criteria of §48.13, Wis. Stats., thus the agency correctly denied Petitioner's application for Kinship Care for these two children.

**THEREFORE, it is**

**ORDERED**

That this appeal is dismissed.

### **REQUEST FOR A REHEARING**

This is a final administrative decision. If you think this decision is based on a serious mistake in the facts or the law, you may request a rehearing. You may also ask for a rehearing if you have found new evidence which would change the decision. Your request must explain what mistake the Administrative Law Judge made and why it is important or you must describe your new evidence and tell why you did not have it at your first hearing. If you do not explain these things, your request will have to be denied.

To ask for a rehearing, send a written request to the Division of Hearings and Appeals, P.O. Box 7875, Madison, WI 53707-7875. Send a copy of your request to the other people named in this decision as "PARTIES IN INTEREST." Your request for a rehearing must be received no later than 20 days after the date of the decision. Late requests cannot be granted.

The process for asking for a rehearing is in Wis. Stat. § 227.49. A copy of the statutes can be found at your local library or courthouse.

### **APPEAL TO COURT**

You may also appeal this decision to Circuit Court in the county where you live. Appeals must be served and filed with the appropriate court no more than 30 days after the date of this hearing decision (or 30 days after a denial of rehearing, if you ask for one).

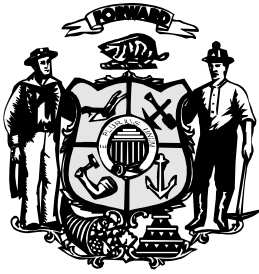
For purposes of appeal to circuit court, the Respondent in this matter is the Department of Children and Families. After filing the appeal with the appropriate court, it must be served on the Secretary of that Department, either personally or by certified mail. The address of the Department is: 201 East Washington Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53703. A copy should also be sent to the Division of Hearings and Appeals, 5005 University Avenue, Suite 201, Madison, WI 53705-5400.

The appeal must also be served on the other "PARTIES IN INTEREST" named in this decision. The process for appeals to the Circuit Court is in Wis. Stat. §§ 227.52 and 227.53.

Given under my hand at the City of Milwaukee,  
Wisconsin, this 30th day of January, 2014

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\sDavid D. Fleming  
Administrative Law Judge  
Division of Hearings and Appeals



**State of Wisconsin\DIVISION OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS**

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The preceding decision was sent to the following parties on January 30, 2014.

Professional Services Group - PSG

DCF - Kinship Care

DCF - Kinship Care